



**U.S. Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Western District of Texas**

**Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**REMAINING DEFENDANTS ENTER GUILTY PLEAS IN OPERATION ROLLING WHEELS**

**United States Attorney Johnny Sutton** announced that in El Paso, Texas, today seven individuals pleaded guilty to their roles in a mail fraud scheme executed to facilitate a drug trafficking and money laundering operation.

Appearing before United States District Judge Harry Lee Hudspeth this morning, the following defendants entered guilty pleas:

- Maria Elena Alderete, manager of Tagg-It Auto Licensing in El Paso and a sworn Deputy Tax Assessor Collector for El Paso County, pleaded guilty to one count each of mail fraud, money laundering and conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute over 1,000 kilograms of marijuana. As a result, Alderete faces up to life in federal prison;
- Ana Maria Perches, owner of Perches Bookkeeping (PB) in El Paso, pleaded guilty to one count each of mail fraud and conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute over 1,000 kilograms of marijuana. As a result, Perches faces up to life in federal prison;
- Santos Perez, owner of Perez Bookkeeping Service (PBS) in El Paso and PBS employee Norma Monje of El Paso both pleaded guilty to one count each of mail fraud and conspiracy to import over 1,000 kilograms of marijuana. As a result, Perez and Monje each face up to life in federal prison;
- Santos Perez's daughter and an employee of Perez Bookkeeping, Amy Pearl Perez (aka Amy Pearl Palacios), pleaded guilty to one count each of mail fraud and Misprision of felony (concealing and not reporting the commission of a felony offense). As a result, Amy Perez faces up to 23 years in federal prison;
- Former Tagg-It employee Olga Cereceres and Adrian Perez, son of Santos Perez and an employee of Perez Bookkeeping, both pleaded guilty to one count of mail fraud. As a result, Cereceres and Adrian Perez each face up to 20 years in federal prison.

On September 23, 2005:

- Tagg-It employees Javier Alderete and Vilma Guzman each pleaded guilty to one count each of mail fraud and Misprision of felony. As a result, Alderete and Guzman each face up to 23 years in federal prison.

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- Rebecca Garcia Martinez, owner of Twin City Insurance in El Paso, and Elizabeth Smotherman (aka Elizabeth Tanner and Elizabeth Smith), owner of Twin Worlds Insurance in El Paso, both pleaded guilty to one count of mail fraud. As a result, Martinez and Smotherman face up to 20 years in federal prison.

On October 6, 2005, Joel Olague, of El Paso, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to import over 1,000 kilograms of marijuana. As a result, he faces up to life in federal prison.

In July 2004, Perches Bookkeeping Service employee Jose Perches, passed away of natural causes while the case was pending.

Between January 2000 and March 24, 2004, the defendants were involved in a scheme to defraud the El Paso County Tax Assessor Collector, the Texas Department of Transportation and the government. All of the defendants—except Martinez, Smotherman and Olague—either issued, or requested the issuance of, vehicle registration stickers, Texas license plates and temporary permits based on fraudulent information and supporting documentation (vehicle identification certificates, insurance cards, drivers license photocopies and title certificates). Furthermore, the defendants admitted knowing beforehand that the fraudulently generated items would be used on vehicles to transport illegal drugs from Mexico to Texas through ports of entry in El Paso.

Maria Alderete, Vilma Guzman, Javier Alderete and Olga Cereceres accepted unauthorized fees, over and above the fees required by the Tax Assessor Collector, in exchange for providing the fraudulent licensing documentation. In addition, Martinez and Smotherman admitted to providing insurance cards to facilitate the illegal operation. Olague admitted to providing actual Texas vehicle identification certificates form VI30 “green sheets” to facilitate the illegal operation.

Finally, from August 2002 through March 25, 2003, Maria Alderete used Tagg-It bank accounts to launder approximately \$82,000 in purported drug proceeds.

During the course of this scheme, authorities seized over 1,000 kilograms of marijuana, more than ten kilos of cocaine and over 500 grams of methamphetamine from vehicles registered by the defendants.

This Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) case was investigated by the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement - Office of Investigations, United States Postal Inspection Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Texas Department of Public Safety and El Paso Police Department. The United States Marshals Service, El Paso County Sheriff's Office, Texas Department of Transportation and the El Paso County Tax Assessor Collector's office provided assistance in the investigation. Assistant United States Attorneys Greg McDonald and Jose Luis Acosta are prosecuting this case on behalf of the Government.

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